

**Minutes of the Healthy Bees Plan
Project Management Board
10th Meeting 13th December 2010
Defra, Nobel House, London**

Present:

Helen Crews	Food & Environment Research Agency [Fera] (Chair)
Helen Carter	Food & Environment Research Agency (Secretary)
Liz McIntosh	Food & Environment Research Agency (Project Manager)
John Home	Bee Farmers' Association [BFA]
John Howat	Bee Farmers' Association
Tim Lovett	British Beekeepers' Association [BBKA]
Martin Smith	British Beekeepers' Association
Chris Hartfield	National Farmers' Union [NFU]
Wally Shaw	Welsh Beekeepers' Association [WBKA]
Dinah Sweet	Welsh Beekeepers' Association
Huw Jones	Welsh Assembly Government [WAG] <i>via telephone conference</i>
Steve Sunderland (observer)	Scottish Executive

Apologies:

Brian Ripley	British Beekeepers' Association
Bob Smith	Amateur Beekeeper
Andy Wattam	Food & Environment Research Agency

1. Welcome and introduction. Timings.

The Chair welcomed attendees to the 10th meeting of the Healthy Bees Plan Project Management Board. Apologies were received from Brian Ripley (BBKA), Bob Smith and Andy Wattam (Fera).

We had expected Lord Henley, the Parliamentary Under Secretary for Environment Food & Rural Affairs attend the meeting but he had sent his apologies as he had been called away to another meeting. Subject to availability, he hoped to attend the 11th meeting. The Secretary will contact the Minister's office once the date has been agreed. Item 3 on the agenda was therefore suspended.

ACTION: Secretary to invite Lord Henley to the 11th meeting of the Board.

2. Update on development of the business case (PMB 10/1)

At the 9th meeting the Board had discussed the draft Business Case and the emerging proposals had been discussed with Brian Harding, the Defra lead for bees,

in late November. Brian had confirmed that he was content with the proposals provided that the total expenditure remained within £579k. The near-final draft of the Business Case was now with Brian's team for internal review to ensure it met the more rigorous requirements of Defra's new template which required more solid evidence to be provided than was previously necessary. Subject to any comments from Brian's team and final alterations, the Project Manager aimed to submit the final case to Brian Harding before Christmas. It was then for Brian to accept or reject the case as ready to be submitted for Defra approval.

PMB 10/1 was a draft package of proposals for the next phase of the Healthy Bees Plan, from 2011 – 2015, which had been arrived at following discussions at the 9th meeting of the Board. Tim Lovett (BBKA) queried how the £579k annual figure had been arrived at and the Chair said that this represented a 25% cut across the whole of the bee health work which consisted of:

- £1.3m for the bee health programme, which had not been subject to a cut under the Comprehensive Spending Review due to its statutory nature.
- £1.1m per annum for the Healthy Bees Plan, which had been cut by 50% under the Comprehensive Spending Review.

The Project Manager asked the Board whether they had any comments on PMB 10/1 and each section was discussed as follows:

Outcome: improved beekeepers' husbandry standards to minimise pest and disease risks through an enhanced education and training programme, co-funded and in partnership with the beekeeping associations.

Item 1 – BBKA-based coordinator continuing to drive roll out of the BBKA-led education programme. [5k per annum]

Item 2 – Continued local delivery of BBKA-led education programme. [10k per annum]

Item 3 – Continued training of trainers on specific topics led by the National Diploma of Beekeeping Board. [10k per annum]

Item 4 – Fera-supported train the trainer courses. [5k per annum]

The Chair was aware of reservations which had previously been expressed by Bob Smith, the Bee Farmers' Association and Brian Ripley (BBKA). Martin Smith (BBKA) summarised their views saying that for years 2 (2012/13), 3 (2013/14) and 4 (2014/15) there was a limited amount of partnership funding for education. Of the £579k allocated to the plan per annum, only £30k had been allocated to the improvement in husbandry standards. The Chair said that there may be scope for the re-allocation of some funds, which would be discussed under item 5 (see below). In addition, the Chair recognised that this figure would be increased once matched funding was accounted for. Martin Smith (BBKA) said that the BBKA did have some funds which it could make available for matched funding, provided this was to a maximum of £50k - £60k.

John Howat (BFA) was concerned that the stakeholders were investing a considerable amount of time into the Healthy Bees Plan, for example the time spent

by the BBKA on CiC, but were not being funded for this. Martin Smith (BBKA) said that the BBKA had split the contract for CiC into 2 areas: firstly, management of the contract, which was provided free of charge and, secondly, delivery of the contract which was charged for. He did, however, agree that the management of the contract required significant input from the BBKA.

The Chair said that she was aware of the considerable input from stakeholders and was very grateful for this. Nevertheless, she felt that this needed to be balanced against the benefits to the bee community particularly as the inspection service was free of charge. However, Tim Lovett (BBKA) said that this free service needed to be balanced against the estimated £200m per annum which bees contributed to pollination services in the United Kingdom. The Chair said that she was aware of this argument and the importance of pollination services had been acknowledged in the Business Case.

Outcome: reduced incidence and spread of statutory pests and diseases through a strengthened programme of inspections

Item 5 – 10 to 14 additional FTE seasonal bee inspectors (SBI) in England (i.e, in addition to around 18 FTE inspectors provided by the core programme). [£434k per annum].

The Project Manager explained that funding for years 2 (2012/13), 3 (2013/14) and 4 (2014/15) depended on the evidence gathered from year 1 (2011/12) regarding the effectiveness of the National Diploma in Beekeeping (NDB), Course in a Case (CiC) and the Random Apiary Survey (RAS). The number of bee inspectors in years 2, 3 and 4 could potentially be reduced by £30k per annum, which represented 1 full-time equivalent Seasonal Bee Inspector. This saving could be allocated to the education area with, for example, an additional £20k being given to the local delivery of the BBKA-led education programme and an additional £10k being given to the NDB 'train the trainer' courses. Martin Smith (BBKA) agreed that this was a better offer. John Howat (BFA) also agreed and commented that there was potential for a reduction in the number of Bee Inspectors as improvements in education and husbandry were realised. In addition, Dinah Sweet (WBKA) thought that the Random Apiary Survey would be a good indicator of the number of Inspectors required in each geographical area and may result in more efficient ways of working.

Tim Lovett (BBKA) asked the Chair to clarify the current budget for the National Bee Unit and the Chair said that it totalled £1.3m, including overheads, which funded:

- National Bee Inspector
- Regional Bee Inspectors
- Seasonal Bee Inspectors
- Head of the National Bee Unit
- NBU diagnostic and support staff

Outcome: effective engagement with beekeepers to improve bee health through enhancing the usefulness of the National Bee Unit's BeeBase website as a key resource for beekeepers (including issuing email alerts about disease outbreaks and

technical updates) and to increase the numbers of beekeepers registered voluntarily on BeeBase

Item 6 – NBU-based coordinator. [50k per annum].

The Project Manager said that it was intended that the NBU-based coordinator would improve BeeBase since there was currently a lack of resource within the National Bee Unit to do so. Tim Lovett (BBKA) said that the BBKA had supported this via the Communications Working Group where it was agreed that beekeepers needed to view the website as a valuable and up-to-date resource. He then asked for clarification regarding how the £50k per annum was to be spent and the Chair said that it represented salary costs.

At the 9th meeting, the Board had agreed that the Education Extension Officer post, currently occupied by Richard Ball (Fera) and Ian Homer (Fera), evolved into the NBU based co-ordinator post, provided that no additional funding was required. For clarification the Chair said that Ian Ball and Richard Homer were in permanent roles which were funded by the National Bee Unit. However, from April 2011, their 2 year FTE post would cease. If they transferred into the NBU based co-ordinator post they would continue to be funded by the core bee health programme. A detailed job description was available, which the Board had seen at the 8th meeting, and the Project Manager agreed to circulate this, together with the process of filling the post. Once they had considered the job description, the Chair asked the Board to make her aware of their preferences for filling the post.

Chris Hartfield (NFU) emphasised that it would be essential to recruit the right person with a balance of communication and technical skills who might be found within Fera. John Home (BFA) queried the timescale for the recruitment and the Chair said that there was currently a recruitment freeze across the whole of the Civil Service which required that requests for recruitment gained Ministerial approval before being advertised. This appointment would be submitted to the Minister early in the New Year with recruitment taking place as soon as possible.

Item 7 – BeeBase technical enhancements. [£10k per annum].

Martin Smith (BBKA) and Tim Lovett (BBKA) queried whether the technical enhancements for BeeBase could be put out to tender as a £10k contract. However, the Chair felt that there may be potential issues with this due the nature of the work and the access to the Fera IT systems which would be required. Chris Hartfield (NFU) agreed that contracting out this work was not a preferred option.

Martin Smith (BBKA) queried whether any funding was available from Scotland for BeeBase and the Chair said that she would discuss the Scottish concordat with Mike Brown, the Head of the National Bee Unit.

Item 8 – Survey of beekeepers' husbandry practices and overwintering losses [£5k per annum].

Martin Smith (BBKA) said that there was currently 1 survey carried out in 3 different ways. He summarised this as follows:

- The Fera survey which was based on a self selecting group of beekeepers
- The BBKA survey which was based on a random survey of members
- The survey carried out by the NBU's Inspectors which concentrated on visits to 'high priority' areas.

Wally Shaw (WBKA) considered the BBKA survey to be the most reliable because it was based on a random survey of thousands of members. He felt that the Fera survey was less reliable as it was based on a self selecting group of beekeepers. He considered the Inspector's survey to be the least accurate as it concentrated only on areas which were considered 'high priority'. John Home (BFA) agreed saying that gaining accurate results was essential as they were an important indicator of improved husbandry practices.

The Board agreed with this view and the Chair summed up that the next step would be for BBKA (Martin Smith) to ask their current survey agency to develop a proposal on options for developing a coordinated survey for consideration by the Board. Wally Shaw (WBKA) would provide technical input to discussions with BBKA's survey agency. John Howat (BFA) said that the BFA currently carried out a related survey and Wally agreed to discuss this with him separately.

Outcome: effective management and coordination of Phase 2 of implementation, including securing additional funding for research and education activities from a wide range of sources

Item 9 – Project management costs. [£50k per annum]

The Board agreed that this remained the same as for phase 1 of the Plan.

Item 10 - Identify and implement innovative approaches to securing funding for research and education activities to support Phase 2 of implementation. [£20k in year 1 only].

The Project Manager explained that £20k had been allocated in year 1 (2011/12) to enable Fera to establish a forum for developing and seeking funding for research and education work. No funding had been allocated to years 2 (2012/13), 3 (2013/14) and 4 (2014/15) as it was anticipated that funding would be found from other sources. Martin Smith (BBKA) felt that the BBKA was in a good position to secure this funding as they were an educational charity. Tim Lovett (BBKA) thought that the Research Funders Forum had demonstrated the difficulties in securing funding in this way. The Chair reminded the Board that Defra would not support 'near market' applied research.

Martin Smith (BBKA) queried how the funds would be controlled and the Chair said that no decisions had been made and it would be for stakeholders to decide. The Project Manager agreed re-draft item 10 to reflect this.

In summing up the discussion on the draft business case, the Chair noted that PMB was content with the proposals, subject to the changes agreed at this meeting.

ACTIONS: 1. Project Manager to circulate the job description for the NBU based co-ordinator to the Board for their input. 2. Chair to discuss the Scottish concordat with Mike Brown (NBU). 3. Wally Shaw and John Howat to discuss the BFA survey on husbandry practices and overwintering losses. 4. Project Manager to re-draft item 10 on PMB 10/1.

[3. Lord Henley]

4. Sign off note of 9th meeting for posting on BeeBase. Actions from 9th meeting. November Highlight report. Risks and Issues log. (PMB 10/2)

Sign off note of 9th meeting for posting on BeeBase

Wally Shaw (WBKA) asked for clarification regarding the Random Apiary Survey (RAS) on page 3. He was aware that the RAS was looking at organisms and clinical disease but wanted to know whether colonies can have disease present in them without suffering from disease.

The Board were content with the remainder of the minutes which the Secretary would now post on BeeBase.

Actions from 9th meeting

The Chair and the Project Manager still needed to draft a formal letter to associations covering data protection issues and encouraging BeeBase registration.

The Chair still needed to clarify the position regarding the printing of the Varroa leaflet which was currently on hold due to a government wide freeze on marketing activities. Martin Smith (BBKA) said that the BBKA currently required 4,000 Varroa leaflets which were considered essential to beekeeper education.

November Highlight report. Risks and Issues log. (PMB 10/2)

The Project Manager introduced the November Highlight report and the Risks and Issues log.

Highlight report

Financial Statement

The budget for the second year of the plan would be made available to the Board in January 2011.

Huw Jones (WAG) offered to update the Board on the Welsh Budget for 2011/12. There was a single budget for statutory work and the Healthy Bees Plan which was still subject to final ministerial agreement. There had been a 10% cut in the budget for 2011/12, however, since the RAS was due to finish in June 2011, it was possible to maintain the current level of expenditure on the other areas i.e. Bee Inspectors, NBU, BeeBase development. Following analysis of the RAS results, WAG would review the inspection programme and how it should be managed from 2012/13.

Risks and Issues Log

Risk 9: Poor partnership working with beekeeping associations to help in the delivery of the plan

Bob Smith had requested that an additional risk was added which related to the delivery of the plan being hampered at a local level by a lack of involvement from local beekeeping associations. The Chair agreed that this would better reflect the current situation so the risk would be split into 'national' which would be on 'green' and 'local' which would be on 'amber'.

Risk 10: Delivery by the BBKA and NDB of the education contract with Fera

Martin Smith (BBKA) updated the Board saying that the education project was progressing well and that he was due to have an update meeting with the Project Manager next week; this would also involve Bill Cadmore of the BBKA. The Project Manager asked whether the Board wanted to see details of training events and courses and they agreed that this would be beneficial. The Project Manager would request details from Bill Cadmore and circulate these to the Board.

Dinah Sweet (WBKA) queried whether Wales were due to receive training as she was currently not aware that any was planned. Martin Smith (BBKA) said that some training would be available to Scotland and Wales and it was likely to take place at the end of March; he suggested that Dinah discussed this with Bill Cadmore.

Wally Shaw (WBKA) had attended the Ormskirk novice level CiC and had considered it to be a very good course. However, he felt that the yellow CiC attempted to introduce too many ideas to beginner beekeepers. In addition, the tutor notes contained a number of errors and the Powerpoint presentation, for use by tutors, appeared over complicated. Martin Smith (BBKA) said that he was aware that the CiC needed a formal review process and he asked Wally to provide a formal critique on the novice CiC to Chris Deaves. Comments received would be collated and used to update all of the CiCs periodically, with the first review due to take place in March/April 2011.

Tim Lovett (BBKA) said that the BBKA was actively promoting training as follows:

- They planned to hold an education session for trainers at the BBKA Spring Convention, which would consist of a 1.5 hour session on the CiC. In addition, Chris Deaves (BBKA) would promote education and training in the 'speakers corner'.
- The BBKA Exam Board was currently discussing how to keep all of the trainers at least 1 examination ahead of those being trained.
- The BBKA monthly newsletter would include a training section in future issues.

Dinah Sweet (WBKA) said that the WBKA had been successful in securing £6k of funding from the regional Co-op. They planned to use the money to fund a conference to which two people from each association would be invited. Martin Smith (BBKA) suggested that it would be useful to distribute details of the Welsh NDB courses at the conference and Dinah agreed to speak to Ken Basterfield regarding this.

ACTIONS: 1. Secretary to post the minutes of the 9th meeting on to BeeBase. 2. Chair and Project Manager to draft a formal letter to associations regarding data protection issues and encouraging BeeBase registration. 3. Chair to clarify the position regarding the Varroa leaflets and provide an update to the BBKA. 4. Project Manager to add an additional risk to the log regarding the delivery of the plan via the local associations. 5. Project Manager to distribute course dates (Fera contract with BBKA and NDB) to the Board. 6. Dinah Sweet to discuss availability of training in Wales with Bill Cadmore. 7. Dinah Sweet to discuss the availability of NDB course details for distribution at the forthcoming conferences in Wales.

5. Update on contract with BBKA and NDB on education project

Martin Smith (BBKA) had circulated a paper titled 'Beekeeping Trainers: Options for an Approval System', which had been prepared by Chris Deaves, the Chair of the Education and Husbandry workstream. The paper aimed to address the increased demand for beekeeping tutoring provision and how tutors were approved. Martin said that point 2.6 needed to be amended to reflect the NBU's teaching role and he then asked the Board whether they had any additional comments.

The Chair thanked Martin for the paper and said that it would be helpful if the paper had an Executive Summary on the front page; the Project Manager said that she would action this with Martin.

Martin Smith (BBKA) said that the paper recommended a continuing personal development (CPD) form of training but this required some additional funding from the Healthy Bees Plan. He wanted to know whether it was worthwhile progressing these recommendations in spite of the current funding issues. The Chair asked the Board to email their comments on the paper to Martin early in the New Year. Following receipt of these comments, the Project Manager and Martin would discuss how the proposals could be developed.

ACTIONS: 1. Martin Smith to amend the paper ‘Beekeeping Trainers: Options for an Approval System’ to reflect that the NBU did have a teaching role. 2. Project Manager and Martin Smith to draft an executive summary. 3. PMB to email their comments on the paper to Martin Smith. 4. Following receipt of the Boards comments, Project Manager and Martin Smith to discuss development of the proposals.

6. **Ideas and planning for review of phase 1 including governance and lessons learned (PMB 10/3)**

The Chair proposed that there was a stakeholder day during March 2011 which would include the Project Management Board and the workstream Chairs. In addition to other agenda items, this would include lessons learned from phase 1 of the Plan (2009 to 2011) and a forward look to phase 2 (2011 to 2015). The Chair thought that the Healthy Bees Plan would be audited so evidence and lessons learned were essential.

Rather than holding a stakeholder meeting, the Board agreed that there should be an extended meeting of the Healthy Bees Plan Project Management Board with the Chairs and an additional member of each workstream also invited. The Board agreed the following: i) it was the final meeting of the Board for phase 1; ii) it was an opportunity to review the workstreams; iii) it was an opportunity to finalise the financial details contained in PMB 10/1.

The Project Manager said that PMB 10/3 ‘draft progress report for phase 1 2009/10 – 2010/11’ would be discussed at the extended meeting of the Board and she asked the Board to send her their comments on the paper before Christmas.

ACTION: PMB to send their comments on PMB 10/3 to the Project Manager before Christmas.

7. **Update on legislation – risk pathways and evidence PMB 10/4**

PMB 10/4 looked at current gaps in domestic legislation on bee health and the risks which might arise from this. Having considered several risks, Fera had concluded that robust evidence was only available in one area, the risks associated with honey packing plants, and would be considering further with lawyers. Huw Jones (WAG) said he was in favour of guidance being used to encourage industry to co-operate and that changes to legislation needed to be a last resort. John Home (BFA) thought that it was pointless to introduce legislation in areas where it was not enforceable.

Wally Shaw (WBKA) said that bringing bees from abroad was another area of concern as it was the most probable way in which disease would be introduced, for example, the highly pathogenic variety of EFB currently being experienced in Switzerland. Dinah Sweet (WBKA) said that the import of bees from 3rd countries which had travelled via the EU was also of concern since they were only spot checked in the same way as EU imports. The Project Manager said that before we could consider our response to risks from imports, we needed to provide evidence as to precisely how much disease was being imported from Europe. However, Tim

Lovett (BBKA) thought that this was impossible since data was only gathered for imports from 3rd countries.

The Chair thought that it may be beneficial to consider the non-native aspect to importing bees into the United Kingdom and Tim Lovett (BBKA) queried whether there may be animal/human health considerations. The Project Manager said that, following the RAS results, there would be a complete review of the bee health inspection service during 2011 and bee disease control policy would form part of that review. It was agreed that this should be discussed further at the 11th meeting of the Board.

ACTION: Project Manager to put disease control policy on the agenda for the 11th meeting of the Board.

8. Update from honey packers – draft code of practice

John Howat (BFA) updated the Board saying that the code of practice would be ratified at a meeting with the honey packers on Wednesday 15th December; he agreed to confirm this with the Project Manager following the meeting.

ACTION: John Howat to update the Project Manager on the ratification of the draft code of practice for honey packers.

9. Other current issues/events including review of charging, announcements, EC ‘Honeybee health’

Review of charging

The Chair said that full economic cost recovery had currently been suspended for the bee health inspection service but Defra had queried whether the NUB could charge for training at full economic cost recovery. The Project Manager said that some associations had offered to pay for training in the past. John Howat (BFA) thought that it may be possible to apply a £50 charge but he thought that this was the maximum which associations would expect to pay.

EC ‘honeybee health’

The Project Manager wanted to make the Board aware of a statement from the European Commission of 6th December which outlined the need for more action in the EU on bee health. The statement was available at:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/10/1667&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Huw Jones (WAG) said that he was not aware that this paper had cross referenced to the animal and health reviews which were also taking place in the EU.

10. Any other business and date of next meeting

Any other business

Tim Lovett (BBKA) had put the Insect Pollinator Initiative on the agenda at the BBKA Spring Convention and it was intended that this would cover all of the projects which were currently in progress.

John Howat (BFA) said that some beekeepers had been waiting for 2 months for the results of residue testing in honey; he was aware that this process took only 12 days in Europe. Steve Sunderland (Scottish Executive) said that there had been a delay in sending the results from VMD and that they had now been sent out.

Wally Shaw was concerned about a recent increase in the trend for foundation beeswax and that there was currently no knowledge of what was being sold and what it contained. The Project Manager said that she would check whether this was covered by Animal Health legislation.

Date of next meeting

It was agreed that the 11th meeting of the Board would take place in early March and would be held at the NFU in Stoneleigh.

ACTIONS: 1. Project Manager to look at the legislation covering foundation beeswax. 2. Secretary to arrange the 11th meeting of the Board for early March 2011 in Stoneleigh.